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RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0165
RUEHOR/AMEMBASSY GABORONE 0929
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0193
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0372
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2368
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0279
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 1342
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2302
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 8925
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 5208
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA 0466
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 0158
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 0079
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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR OES, OES/EGC ED FENDLEY AND DREW NELSON, AF/E, AND AF/EPS
DEPT PASS TO NASA FOR JACK KAYE
DEPT PASS TO USGS
POSTS FOR REO AND ESTH OFFICERS
ADDIS ABABA FOR REO LISA BRODEY

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SUBJECT: KENYA WANTS GREATER ACCESS TO GEOSPATIAL IMAGERY TO REDUCE
CONFLICT AND PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT

11. Summary: Speaking at a recent international conference in Nairobi, Kenya's Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai said that increased access to geospatial information can help countries like Kenya to improve management of natural resources, reduce conflict promote sustainable use of resources, and adapt to climate change. She challenged attendees to bridge the technology gap in this area between rich and poor countries. The United States continues to provide geospatial information through imagery, training and research, and U.S. LANDSAT satellite imagery is viewed as an opportunity to "fast-track" development. Maathai and others believe NASA and other USG agencies should increase the availability of inexpensive, high resolution, timely imagery and resources as a means to reduce or prevent environmental degradation and resulting conflicts over water, land, and animal resources. End Summary.

Africa Cannot Afford to Fall Further Behind

12. "Geospatial Technology for Biodiversity Conservation and Management" was the theme of the July 18-20 Society for Conservation Geographic Information Systems (SCGIS) conference sponsored by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Some two hundred attendees heard from a variety

of guest speakers, including Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai, who promoted increasing awareness of technology and its application in Kenya, and exposing young people and policymakers to the possibilities and potentials of geospatial technology. She said GIS technology is an inexpensive method for assessing past and current conditions as well as modeling future implications of land use activities. She believes policy-makers, donors and local communities will increasingly rely on GIS technology to more effectively manage resources and mediate conflicts over limited resources.

"Ring the Bell" on Climate Change

13. Maathai claimed there is not enough concern and anxiety in Africa concerning climate change, even though it is understood that Africa will be significantly impacted, and she directed her audience to "ring the bell" on the importance of mitigating the impact. She cited the example of the billion tree-planting campaign launched by UNEP and the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) as a symbolic effort to energize people around the world to do something about the environment. Prof. Maathai emphasized each of the delegate's carbon footprints, including carbon emitted en route to the meeting through aircraft, automobiles, and even walking. She encouraged everyone to plant ten trees to account for their carbon dioxide emissions.

Conflict Over Resources

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14. A common theme within the conference was the conflict over resources between different groups of people and between humans and wildlife. One speaker cited examples of participatory geographic information systems (PGIS) in Tanzania in which communities use geospatial maps to identify regions of conflicts over resources and negotiate boundaries. Such tools will become increasingly important as the population continues to grow and resources decline. In a follow-up discussion with EconOff, Dr. Tesfaye Korme of the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD) noted the current violent land disputes in the Mt. Elgon region of Kenya and discussed the history of using geospatial technology to establish boundaries and reduce land conflicts in the region. Korme expressed his appreciation for the important role NASA and other USG agencies played in establishing the facility in 1975, contributing remote sensing data, and enabling the center to serve as a focal point in geospatial research, training and distribution. Korme specifically commended a proposed early flood warning project with NASA.

Successful Applications of GIS in Kenya

15. A few strong examples showed how using GIS for monitoring the environment can influence policy and humanitarian applications. Elephants are a key tourist attraction, but are in growing conflict as people encroach upon reserves. Male elephants seeking higher quality food during reproductive periods commonly leave protected areas at night to graze in farmers' fields, resulting in conflict and death on both sides. Using GIS in combination with other technologies, researchers are able to track their movements and try to limit harm. Dr. Mohammed Said of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) highlighted the use of GIS in poverty mapping for the allocation of development funds and evaluating advances in overcoming poverty. Mr. Christian Lambrechts of UNEP used time series images to graphically demonstrate the loss of forest in the Maasai Mara. The images evoked a very strong response from the government; recovery efforts are currently underway.

Comment

¶6. The conference was well attended and the participants were very enthusiastic regarding the many uses of GIS technology to support conservation and conflict resolution in Kenya. The consensus among attendees was that, through sustainable management of resources, humans and wildlife could get along in harmony. The USG continues to make geospatial information available by providing imagery, training and research. Despite concerns about time delays and poor image resolution, many individuals expressed their appreciation for U.S. LANDSAT satellite imagery, saying it is the most usable and affordable GIS resource to help "fast-track" development. Researchers and practitioners are anxious to expand the use and application of geospatial analysis in the fields of conservation, policymaking, poverty alleviation and conflict resolution. USG efforts to provide more affordable, timely, high resolution imagery

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will contribute to these shared goals and to the U.S.-Kenya partnership.
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